

State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.1635 | FAX (517) 373.3300

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/vanwoerkom/

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Contact: Kirk Hanna
(517) 373-1635

Tougher Fines for Methamphetamine Producers

Legislation will help protect public health and safety

LANSING — Fines and penalties in Michigan will increase for people who participate in the production of methamphetamine under a package of seven bills passed in the Senate yesterday.

“This drug is a plague, an epidemic affecting citizens all across Michigan,” said state Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom (R-Norton Shores). “This problem has had an acute impact on rural communities, as farmers struggle to protect from the theft of anhydrous ammonia.”

Methamphetamine is a growing concern throughout Michigan with clandestine labs being found in rural and city areas, barns, garages, apartments, storage areas and vehicles. The production of methamphetamine can cause serious environmental risks since the toxic waste produced is often dumped in public sewer systems or directly on the ground.

In addition, production of meth can result in fires or explosions, injuring or killing law enforcement agents and fire personnel who respond to the scene of a meth lab.

The package of bills includes provisions that:

- Prohibit the possession of more than 12 grams of pseudoephedrine (with the exception of pediatric products), a chemical used in the production of methamphetamine;
- Increase to 20 years imprisonment the maximum penalty for those owning or possessing the places, chemicals or equipment used in production of the illegal stimulant;
- Create a new crime with a maximum penalty of four years imprisonment for people who transport anhydrous ammonia in unapproved containers;
- Require inspection of property used as a clandestine lab for the production of methamphetamine to determine if there is contamination, and require public warnings if any is discovered.

“The Senate passed this legislation in an attempt to deal with this serious problem head on,” Van Woerkom said. “We need to ensure that the law protects both public health and safety.”

Senate Bills 648-652, 698 and 777 now go to the House for consideration.